Cross border external QA:

Reflections on the meeting

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What is the vision?

• Building the EHEA
• Market.. (but what kind of market?)
Positive view of EQA

• Disturb “monopoly” of national agencies;
• respect & respond to institutional autonomy;
• enable relevant, good practice international QA to thrive and develop;
• promote intercultural values
• Focus on enhancement.....
Negative view

• Lose public responsibility;
• lack necessary local specific knowledge and understanding;
• Import inappropriate, judgemental external expertise
• waste money;
• lose trust;
Where do we stand now?

• Survey shows that things are moving and agencies are active: networks, projects, evaluations in neighbouring countries; TNE etc

• 2012 Bologna implementation report: 11 EHEA countries where HEIs can choose to be evaluated by non national agency. Number seems set to rise for 2015 report
But...

• Overviews sometimes misrepresent aspects of reality;
• 50% of agencies didn’t respond...
• Examples here show that developments have been between countries with cultural / linguistic affinity and mainly confined to EU: FR / BE(Fr); CH/DE/AU; UK TNE
• Is this really what we understand by a European quality assurance space, taking advantage of diversity?
Motivation for EQA?

• Agencies: impetus to develop; to learn and improve their practice; to be among the pioneers; to avoid getting bored (doing the same things in the same way)...

• Institutions: competitive advantage; international reputation; prestige.

• Is there a danger that quality enhancement becomes confused with self promotion?
Attitudes: government

- *Ok for our agencies to work abroad, but not quite sure about other agencies working here.*
- What is behind this?
- Public responsibility & concern that social dimension will be overlooked
- Arrogance: “we are the best” and nothing to be learned from EQA?
- Fear of being found out that we might not be the best?
Attitudes: agencies

• Divides into those who are doing it & those who would like to do it..
• Are we sure?
• Maybe also those who would not like to do it, and those who would rather others didn’t do it either
• Agencies who respond to survey may have very different attitudes to those who don’t – and we need to engage with those who don’t respond as well...
Attitudes: HEIs

- We don’t really know, (yet) and need to find out
- Experience of programmes such as IEP show that HEIs are positive and engaged when they see interest...
- Also likely to have concerns about cost, logistics, legal implications etc
How to do EQA?

- Should agencies change behaviour abroad?
- Different views: Keep the same standards, procedures and approaches vs
- Adapt to demands/requirements of HEIs
- Issues with language/logistics/intercultural attitudes/knowledge of other systems need thought
- ESG crucial...
Some concerns

1. Conflation of cross border QA with recognition and mobility:
   • “Cooperation involving French agency means that French state can now accept Belgian engineers”
   • Joint programmes/degrees: recognition problems if QA issues not solved (and they haven’t been)
   • Paradox: cooperation may create a danger of being less open to those with whom we don’t cooperate.
Concerns

2 “It’s more important for small countries”

• small countries need to be international in their approach to QA

• But so do bigger countries...

• Danger of thinking that bigger means better, and that big countries dominate the EQA “market”

• So how can we create a level playing field?
Concerns

3  becomes a trendy “add on” that gets in the way of addressing quality issues...

• Ljubljana: do you need foreign agency programme/faculty/system evaluation to prepare for national accreditation?
Key challenge

• How to move on from “if it’s important (legal implications) must be a national agency responsibility”?

• Good to hear of examples (BE/FR) where programmes failed accreditation... EQA shouldn’t be perceived as an easy option
So should we carry on?

- Is there an alternative? Is the world going to become less international?
- EQA not everything: internationalisation at home
- Government commitments have been made, and we should embrace opportunity
- However, can address this agenda thoughtfully and cooperatively, or less intelligently focusing on self interest
What might help?

1. Need to share experience, learn from mistakes

=> Think how best to do this (govts/agencies/HEIs)
What might help?

2 Market model needs to be considered. Selection by HEIs from EQAR list may not be the best way...

• Guidance and advice to match HEIs with agencies. Brokering role for E4?
What might help?

3 Resource allocation.. May need European funding to support some agencies to internationalise

4 Sharing of experts: common database (project for ENQA/EQAR?)
That's All Folks